

**The Report of the  
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**South Davis Junior High School  
298 West 2600 South  
Bountiful, Utah 84010**

**April 20-21, 2004**



Utah State Office of Education  
250 East 500 South  
P.O. Box 144200  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

**THE REPORT OF THE  
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**South Davis Junior High School  
298 West 2600 South  
Bountiful, Utah 84010**

**April 20-21, 2004**

**UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION**

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## **FOREWORD**

A major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate in-service growth and school improvement. Consequently, requirements include not only meeting the standards of the Utah State Office of Education, but also completing a school evaluation every six years.

School evaluation is that effort by the local school staff to take a comprehensive look at the school's program, operation, and effect. The school determines how closely its purposes and philosophy coincide with its actual practices and the degree to which its stated objectives are being reached. It is a three-phased program: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, April 20-21, 2004, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to meet the requirements referred to above.

The entire staff of South Davis Junior High School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Bryon Nielsen is commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for the generally fine program being provided for South Davis Junior High School students, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more adequately meet the needs of the students of South Davis Junior High School.

Patrick Ogden  
Interim State Superintendent  
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Jill Snyder .....	Language Arts Supervisor
Wayne Baker.....	P.E./Health Supervisor
Kathleen Chronister .....	Curriculum Standards

## **SOUTH DAVIS JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

### **ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF**

#### **School Administration**

Bryon Nielsen ..... Principal  
Cheryl May ..... Assistant Principal  
Jeff Jorgensen..... Assistant Principal

#### **Counseling**

Martin Hardy ..... Counselor  
Tina Ackerman..... Counselor  
RoseMarie Evans ..... Counselor

#### **Support Staff**

Cris Plowman..... Administration Secretary  
Elaine Page..... Attendance Secretary  
Mary Nelson..... Registrar/Counseling Secretary  
Ann Alldredge..... ISS/Citizenship Secretary  
Audrey DeArcos ..... ISS/Citizenship Secretary  
Kathy Rose..... Dining Center Manager  
Gwen Huffaker, Erma Hebdon, Kay Hicks, Ann Bement..... Dining Center  
Sharon Forbes ..... Computer Lab Manager  
Bill Chapple ..... Head Custodian  
Dave Benson ..... Assistant Head Custodian  
Polly McQuarrie..... STARS Coordinator  
Andrea Baugh ..... Special Education  
Shelly Blundell..... Special Education  
Kathy Maughan..... Special Education  
Ross Fishburn ..... Special Education  
Antja Roth..... Special Education  
Carla Upton..... Special Education  
Tami Avery ..... TS/Computer Support  
Paul Cardall..... Resource Officer  
Kim Parry..... Pizza Shop Manager  
Joan Walker ..... Lunch Supervision  
Linda Wudel..... Lunch Supervision  
Vickie Bingham ..... Middle School Coordinator  
Thomas Kern..... School Psychologist

### **Faculty**

Bev Bailey  
Dave Beecher  
Paulette Birdsall  
Ralph Brower  
Kristine Brown  
Roxanne Brown  
Todd Campbell  
Maureen Clemons  
Chantel Cowan  
Cathleen Edwards  
Norman Mark  
Enomoto  
Brian Ferguson  
Lauren Goodsell  
Doris Hadley

Natalie Hattaway  
Vaughn Hyde  
Sue Kirkland  
Paul Lombardi  
John Milligan  
Melissa Moon  
Peter Norton  
Jacqueline Pennington  
(Turner)  
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June Presser  
Kaylene Sandall  
Jennifer Santizo  
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Linda Sorensen

Kari Steed  
SalleeAnn Sudbury  
Karen Taylor  
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Elizabeth Tingey  
Judith Upton  
Emily Vonk  
Linda Wallace  
Ray Walters  
Sharon Wangsgard  
Darcie Winegar  
Nancy Worthen  
Winward Young



## **SOUTH DAVIS JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of South Davis Junior High School, together with parents and community, is to provide students with the knowledge and skills to be life-long learners and positive contributors to society.

### **BELIEF STATEMENTS**

- A safe, supportive and positive environment enhances student learning.
- Student learning is a responsibility shared by students, parents, school, and community.
- Student achievement is cultivated by a variety of teaching methods, assessments, and resources to \accommodate diverse learning styles and needs.
- Student motivation is enhanced through a curriculum that is relevant to their lives.
- School should provide opportunities for personal success academically, aesthetically, emotionally, physically and socially.
- Education in good citizenship and character development promotes social and personal responsibility.
- Communication is a shared responsibility in a learning community.

## **MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM**

Catherine Jensen, West Hills Middle School, Jordan School District,  
Visiting Team Chairperson

Mary Lane, Bonneville Junior High School, Granite School District

Amelia Schwartz, Canyon View Junior High School, Alpine School District

Velden Wardle, T. H. Bell Junior High School, Weber School District

Susan Gossling, Sand Ridge Junior High School, Weber School District

Jennie Fox, Bountiful Junior High School, Davis School District

**VISITING TEAM REPORT**  
**SOUTH DAVIS JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

**CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE**

South Davis Junior High School is located in Bountiful, Utah and is part of the Davis School District. The school draws students from three different communities: North Salt Lake (41 percent), Bountiful (41 percent) and Woods Cross (18 percent). The school opened in 1959 and currently has a student population of 935. The students come from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds. Some are very affluent and others are from poverty-stricken backgrounds. Twenty percent of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. South Davis Junior High has a large population of students from single-parent homes (22 percent) and a high mobility rate (23 percent). Ninety-one percent of the students are Caucasians. The Hispanic population represents seven percent of the population, with the remaining two percent being Asian, African American, Native American, and Pacific Islander. Approximately twenty limited English proficient (LEP) students have been designated as qualifying for English as a Second Language. Ten faculty member have received ESL endorsements.

The Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) is administered to all eighth grade students each fall. The composite score of the test has been above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile for the past seven years. The only subtest that has fallen below the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile during the last seven years was in the area of Total Language in 1999-2000. State Criterion-Referenced Tests are given annually. Scores have remained fairly static over the years of administration. In December of 2003, South Davis was placed on unsatisfactory AYP status as a result of not meeting adequate yearly progress for economically disadvantaged students in the area of Language Arts.

South Davis has several years of school improvement efforts in its history. The school has participated in the Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century program for three years. They have made effort to implement some middle-level philosophies and work collaboratively to improve student achievement. They have been tireless in striving to do what is best for the students. South Davis was assigned a new principal at the end of last school year. The majority of the work of this self-study was completed under the direction of Karen Bertlesen, the previous principal. The current principal, Bryon Nielsen, and an assistant principal, Jeffrey Jorgensen, are new to the school this year. Cheryl May, an assistant principal, served as the chair of the School Leadership Team under the direction of both principals. The administrative team and the school community have faced a great challenge in completing the process of preparation for the site visit in such a short period of time. Ms. May has led the process of helping the new administrators come on board with the work already completed.

- a) *What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of their profile?*

South Davis standardized test scores have remained fairly static for the past several years. Some content areas fall below the district average. The SAT is given to eighth grade students each year. The composite score of the test has been above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile during the last seven years. The adequate yearly progress summary indicated a “NO” in the area of achievement of economically disadvantaged students. Comparisons were made in the profile of CRT results from the school with the district. Many areas tested by the CRT fall below the district average. The profile focuses on comparisons of South Davis Junior High with the district average, and whether or not subpopulations performed at the expected level.

- b) *What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

South Davis Junior High has made an excellent first attempt at collecting and analyzing test data. The school has evaluated the data and made an effort to target specific areas of improvement. The purpose of the profile is to determine who is learning and who is not learning in order to determine interventions to close the achievement gap. Performing within the expected range for a subpopulation is worthy. However, the ultimate goal should be the success of all students. The Visiting Team suggests that South Davis Junior High track disaggregated data for all CRTs in order to determine trends as well as target specific areas in need of improvement. Other indicators such as attendance, discipline and honor roll should also be disaggregated in order to determine over- or underrepresented groups in these categories. Interventions can then be developed to help all students have access to success and improvement at school. Individual teachers should have access to data on individual students in order to better meet academic needs.

South Davis Junior High has made the effort to implement the Results model. Teams of teachers should continue to review the data not only by subject, but by Core standard, and share best teaching strategies with one another. Professional development could focus on refining the collaborative process in order to inform instructional practice and ensure success for all students. South Davis Junior High may explore regrouping for those students not meeting the standards in a particular area.

Interviews with students indicated a perceived lack of understanding of cultural differences and academic challenges faced by minority students. Some students felt they were “invisible” and not as valued as much as their white counterparts. This information can be used to not only improve these negative perceptions, but also to increase engagement in school for these students and thus begin to close the achievement gap.

The Visiting Team suggests that South Davis Junior High develop a data collection and management system that can give timely, disaggregated information to teachers in order to improve instructional practice.

**Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:**

- Disaggregate data on attendance, discipline, and honors programs.
- Disaggregate data on participation in student activities and clubs.
- Collect data based on the Results model to ensure the adoption of the most effective instructional practice.
- Begin to collect data based on the desired results for student learning

**CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS**

- a) *To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

South Davis Junior High is to be commended for the sincere effort made in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students. All stakeholder groups—(administrators, teachers, students, and parents—have been involved in the process. The work was begun under the direction of Karen Bertelsen the previous principal. All key components of the self-study were completed, including development of mission and belief statements and desired results for student learning, departmental analysis, systemic focus group analysis, development of the profile, and the action plan.

Bryon Nielsen was assigned to be principal of South Davis Junior High for this year. He entered the process as the school was in final preparations for the site visit. He faces the challenge of being lately enculturated into the school, as well as gaining understanding and ownership of the work already completed. The Visiting Team recognizes the difficulty in developing unity within a new leadership in such a short period of time. The Team suggest that great care and attention be given by the school leadership to validation of the collaborative work of the school that has already been completed, and that the leadership begin work on the action plan. The collaborative process must be continued as adjustments to the plan are discussed and implemented. Mr. Nielsen has expressed his commitment to doing this.

- b) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

South Davis Junior High School's self-study is a comprehensive survey of the work of the school community and its impact on student success. It is an honest look at the school's current reality. The self-study has raised new questions that should be explored by the school in order to improve efforts on behalf of students.

The self-study does not delve deep enough into issues of instructional effectiveness and overall student performance and behavior. It fails to give a clear picture of those that might be "falling through the cracks." The school leadership team and administration are aware of the gaps in their understanding. Work is underway to gain additional information. It is recommended that the self-study be reviewed and amended as additional information becomes available.

### **CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

South Davis Junior High School's desired results for student learning are as follows:

1.     Effective Communicator
  - Students communicate with clarity, purpose and understanding of audience.
  - Students integrate the use of a variety of communication forms and use a wide range of communication skills.
  - Students recognize, evaluate, and respond to various forms of communication.
2.     Responsible Citizen
  - Students take responsibility for personal actions and act ethically.
  - Students respect their own and others' dignity, needs, rights, and property.
  - Students act as responsible citizens in their community.
3.     Information Literate
  - Students use technology to enhance learning.
  - Students gather, classify, organize, evaluate, and use information effectively to gain new knowledge.
4.     Complex Thinker
  - Students utilize, evaluate, and refine the use of multiple thinking strategies to solve a variety of problems.
  - Students generate new and creative ideas in a variety of contexts.

- Students reflect on and evaluate their learning for the purpose of improvement.
5. Collaborator
- Students work with others in a variety of situations to achieve a common purpose.
  - Students manage and evaluate their behavior as group members.
  - Students effectively deal with disagreement and conflict caused by diversity of opinions and beliefs.

### **Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:**

- a) *To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?*

There is evidence that a comprehensive consensus-building process was established that involved the various stakeholder groups—teachers, staff, parents and students—in the development of a shared vision for the school. This was accomplished through the collaborative efforts of the South Davis Junior High leadership team, with the former principal. Conclusions were reported to the faculty for consideration, deliberation, and consensus.

There is evidence that the leadership team used the school's profile and the latest research of *Results: The Key to Continuous School Improvement* by Mike Schmoker to understand the implications of using the data results cycle to drive student improvement efforts. Next, the school should consider a continuous use of the latest research findings, future trends, and best practices to foster longevity and commitment to the improvement process. Also, in order to improve achievement results for all students, the school should invest in a deeper use of disaggregated data to develop formal remediation strategies for academically at-risk subgroups.

- b) *To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?*

The school's belief statements are comprehensive and address key issues pertinent to effective decision-making and policy development in the school. Next, the school should consider transforming belief statements into core values that drive each educator's practice. One area to examine is the current use of teaching strategies, assessments, and content relevance that might affect the achievement results of subgroup students.

The school's mission statement describes the purpose and direction for the school, and reflects a focus on student learning as the top priority for the school. The

school should consider evaluating whether the statement is sufficiently compelling to call all stakeholders to action.

- c) *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?*

The DRSLs were developed after the mission and belief statements, and align with them in purpose and intent. There is evidence of comprehensive collaboration by the former principal, the leadership team, a writing sub-committee, and the middle-level school coordinator to refine the DRSLs for presentation to the faculty, parents, and community. There is strong evidence for DRSL support and implementation by the entire school community. Next, the school needs to maintain the level of commitment to incorporate DRSLs into the curriculum and find ways to measure DRSL achievement as identified in the action plan.

### **Curriculum Development:**

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?*

The Visiting Team feels that all departments have worked to align their curriculum with the State Core as well as with the district's DESK standards. Teachers at South Davis Junior High have developed their personal curriculum maps. These maps are revisited each year to ensure the students of South Davis Junior High are challenged and supported, and to address diverse learners without compromising the essential knowledge and skills that are to be achieved.

The Visiting Team recommends that the staff discuss the implementation of a more integrated curriculum.

- b) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?*

The desired results for student learning have been identified, and the staff has attained general agreement on the importance of these outcomes. The accreditation process has brought the importance of teaching lifelong skills to the forefront, making the DRSLs an essential part of curriculum planning. There is evidence that many teachers are using various strategies to help support the goals designed in the DRSLs. It is also evident that a plan is in place for ongoing meetings to continue the process of revising and replacing outdated and ineffective curricula.



The next effort should be devoted to using the desired results for student learning as the means to achieve integrated curricula. The DRSLs should become infused into all subject areas and taught through the Core Curriculum standards. Academic student achievement, as indicated by competency in the curriculum standards, will then be enhanced through application of the Utah Life Skills to the DRSLs.

Staff members should work to agree on the specific indicators of success for each of the DRSLs, as well as define an acceptable level of performance. Assessment tools for each of the DRSLs should be developed over the next six to ten years. The indicators, acceptable levels of performance, and assessment tools will answer the questions: “How will we know when students have acquired a certain DRSL?” “How good is ‘good enough’?” And, most importantly, “How will we respond if students do not acquire the skills?” Schools must use the data collected to inform and change instructional practice.

### **Quality Instructional Design:**

- a) *To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?*

Although traditional direct instruction methods are still the primary strategies in place, most members of this faculty are actively working to design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students. According to administrators, parents, faculty members, and students, the variety of learning strategies provide students with increased depth of understanding and motivates students to become more actively involved in the learning process. This belief has motivated many teachers to consistently review and align instructional practices with the goals and performance standards for student learning on an ongoing basis.

Teachers within and across departments have actively worked to share ideas and collaborate to improve instruction. South Davis Junior High has adopted the work of Schmoker in his book *Results*. Work has started on creating “cycles” which include pre-tests and instruction using varying strategies, followed by post-tests to identify effective strategies for individual concepts. These are designed to provide data on effective strategies for future application.

Teachers have expressed the need to have more time scheduled for in-service training for faculty to review diagnostic data and develop alternate instructional strategies and assessments. It is recommended that the school continue with this process as outlined in the action plan. Teachers must collaboratively evaluate student work and share best instructional practices in order to provide optimum learning opportunities for all students.

- b) *To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?*

Although most observed classes used primarily traditional lecture-based strategies, many faculty members were actively engaged in employing a variety of instructional strategies to meet the varied needs of students. During the visit students were engaged in cooperative group projects, written tests, direct instruction, question-and-response class activities, learning games, hands-on activities, modeling, group problem solving, worksheets, individualized activities using technology, and discovery learning. The variety of strategies used needs to be more widely implemented throughout the school.

Parents and students have expressed the desire to see more real-life applications, more hands-on activities and training, and more diverse learning to reach at-risk as well as advanced students. It is recommended that faculty and staff members work to more completely meet these needs as they design instructional strategies for their content areas.

- c) *To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?*

The administration, staff, and community are extremely dedicated to keeping instructional time well protected from disruption and appropriately allocated to support student learning.

Students are provided on a consistent basis with the opportunity to work with teachers or with PLATO before and after school for additional assistance to improve their learning. It is recommended that additional formal opportunities for remediation be made available (e.g., peer tutors, cooperative learning groups, instructional resources, etc.).

### **Quality Assessment Systems:**

- a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

Each teacher has developed assessments to evaluate individual classroom goals. In addition, SATs and CRTs are given yearly. There is evidence of a desire to develop quarterly grade level or departmental assessments that will focus on standards, not merely improvement. Some students felt the need for clearer articulation of teacher expectations. The staff is aware of this, as well as the need for implementing differentiated assessments, and has a plan in place.

Several teachers expressed the difficulty of “re-teaching” concepts that have not been fully comprehended by all students due to time constraints. The Visiting Team recommends that the staff offer more formal opportunities to assist those

students who are experiencing academic challenges, through creative regrouping, before- or after-school programs, or tutoring programs.

Over the next several years, the school should work to develop departmental and subject assessments that can provide consistent data on the effectiveness of instructional practices and individual student achievement. End-of-course tests provide only post-mortem information. They are too late to change student achievement for that student in that course. Periodic assessments can give information regarding struggling students and ineffective instructional practices. Teachers can then take action to correct the problems before the end-of-course tests. This effort will more clearly articulate expectations for student achievement and provide data on that achievement.

- b) *To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?*

Some teachers at South Davis Junior High incorporate a variety of assessments to determine the mastery of course concepts. For example, essays, PowerPoint presentations, oral presentations, reflective writing, and authentic assessments are used, as well as quizzes and formal multiple-choice tests. A portion of the staff uses assessments that align with the DRSLs. The Visiting Team feels there is a need to implement more authentic assessments in each classroom, and recommends a professional development that covers alternative and authentic assessments.

- c) *To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?*

Classroom assessments are designed to be fair to all students. Copies of student IEPs and 504s are provided to teachers to assist them in minimizing bias and distortion. In addition, brain research criteria have been implemented to ensure more equitable assessments. Because of this, South Davis Junior High has begun the practice of providing nutritious snacks and specific scheduling to increase student performance when taking national and state standardized tests. Even though most teachers feel they establish and share with students the criteria necessary to judge student performance, some students feel that more articulation is needed to guarantee understanding by students of all learning styles.

### **Leadership for School Improvement:**

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?*

The Visiting Team commends the staff members of South Davis Junior High School for their commitment to fostering an academic learning climate and

actively supporting teaching and learning. The staff has worked collaboratively to determine the needs of the students and the community, and then develop ways to meet those needs. The Spartan Academy is implemented to meet the needs of those students who are not successful in the regular classroom. *Results* cycles are used to meet department goals through pre-tests, teaching, and post-tests. The staff is to be commended for its efforts to incorporate the desired results for student learning in the curriculum maps as departments and individual teachers.

- b) *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?*

The decision-making process at South Davis Junior High School is collaborative and provides opportunities for the meaningful involvement of the school's stakeholders. Teachers, administrators, parents, and students participated in the focus groups. The input of each group was important to giving an accurate description of the reality of the school. The school has made effort to implement current best practices based on research. Many programs have been implemented without gathering the appropriate data to determine their effectiveness. The new principal recognizes the importance of maintaining the collaborative process in future decision making that includes all stakeholders. The leadership and staff recognize the need to focus on gathering and maintaining more student achievement data, which will help inform the decision-making process and focus improvement efforts. It is suggested that South Davis continue its study of effective middle school practices in order to be responsive to the unique needs of early adolescent students. The National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform is an excellent resource in this work.

- c) *To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?*

The Visiting Team commends the school for its initial efforts to monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness. The implementation of *Results* cycles is one indication of this effort. The overall self-study has been shown to be reflective of the work of the school on behalf of students. Effort should be given to the development of an assessment system based on Core Curriculum standards that can be used diagnostically during the year in order to reveal gaps in achievement in the Core standards and inform instructional practice before the CRT, which serves more as an autopsy of what the students did not learn. The same should begin for the DRSLs. Once this system is in place, the work of the school can really focus on improving student achievement rather than on program implementation. This is the model of continuous improvement.

- d) *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?*

South Davis Junior High School clearly demonstrates strong leadership in providing a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment. Students know what is expected of them, and the consequences of interfering with the positive learning environment. Students are very familiar with the desired results for student learning. They know the purpose of their educational effort. School leadership is dedicated to protecting teaching and learning as the main activity of the school. They work to minimize interruptions to academics, and have recently moved toward healthier food choices in vending machines. Continued study of developmental responsive practices for junior high students is suggested.

- e) *To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?*

The implementation of the DRSLs and adoption of the action plan were fairly recent. Interviews indicate a strong commitment to aligning the school goals, DRSLs, and school improvement efforts. The PTSA organization and School Community Council have been consulted on the allocation of resources toward these ends. It is suggested that the school improvement plan, accreditation action plan, and school Trust Lands plan all be brought into alignment in order to make the most effective change to improve student achievement. Some parents and staff members expressed frustration that some school improvement goals were set at the district level and passed down to the local school. This seemed to invalidate the collaborative work the school community had engaged in throughout the accreditation process. Alignment of all improvement plans will result in stakeholder buy-in, as well as consolidation of effort and less fragmentation.

- f) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?*

South Davis Junior High is to be commended for its collaborative efforts in involving the entire school community in the improvement process. Parents are convinced the school is sincere about doing what is in the best interest of students. They have come to recognize their important role in that partnership. The Community Council has been actively involved in the decision-making process and allocation of resources. The Visiting Team would encourage the active participation of the school community in professional development activities in order to ensure informed decision-making based on research-based best practices.

### **Community Building:**

- a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

The Visiting Team was impressed with the positive and productive working environment at South Davis Junior High School. The overall tone of the school community was very positive. Improvement of communication between parents and teachers should be addressed. Exploration of different avenues of communication is recommended. Enabling Internet access of grades has created one positive avenue of communication. It is recommended that grades be updated regularly in order to assist in communication efforts among students, parents, and teachers.

Monthly Community Council meetings and regular PTSA meetings help to foster community building at the school. Evidence of low parent-teacher conference attendance reflects the need to increase parent and student attendance in order to strengthen working relationships within the school community.

- b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

There is significant evidence that South Davis Junior High extends the school community through collaborative networks. “Mock Interviews” and “Look to the Future” are activities that show community involvement. Also, Back to School Night and individual SEOPs are used to foster support for student learning.

### **Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:**

- a) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

The Visiting Team feels that all departments have worked to align their curricula with the State Core as well as the district’s DESK standards. Teachers at South Davis Junior High have developed their personal curriculum maps. These maps are revisited each year to ensure the students of South Davis Junior High are challenged and supported, and to address diverse learners without compromising the essential knowledge and skills that are to be achieved.

The Visiting Team recommends that the staff discuss the implementation of a more integrated curriculum.

- b) *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

There is evidence that the administration, school, and community support the school's efforts and commitment to continuous improvement. The school has regularly scheduled times each week for meetings, training, or staff development. The school offers support and encouragement to individual teachers or groups to implement improvements or increase training. The improvement process is understood by stakeholders; however, involvement, communication, and the dissemination of information to the community are always ongoing tasks. The Visiting Team was impressed with the level of dedication of the staff to the accreditation process and the desire for continuous improvement.

#### **CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI**

This chapter is not applicable to South Davis Junior High School. Most public junior/middle schools are not accredited by the NAAS, but only by the USOE – it is their choice to join the NAAS or not.

#### **CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN**

- a) *To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?*

The Visiting Team commends South Davis Junior High School for developing an action plan that addresses the critical needs defined through the self-study, and that is focused on improving student achievement, including DRSLs. The plan is well-thought-out and will encourage the school to stretch its capabilities on behalf of student achievement.

- b) *To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?*

For the most part, the plan was developed through the collaborative process. Some concern has been expressed by both staff members and parents about goals that have been imposed from the district level. The school should recognize the legal requirements of No Child Left Behind and the impending Performance Plus requirements, and work to incorporate those requirements in the efforts of the improvement plan on behalf of student achievement.

- c) *How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the school-wide action plan appear to be?*

The Visiting Team commends South Davis Junior High School for its collaborative efforts in the development of the action plan. The Visiting Team suggests that the school refine the action plan to include an assessment and evaluation tool to determine the effectiveness of the plan. At present, the plan is largely program implementation. Data must be collected on the programs implemented in order to determine whether they have had a positive effect on student achievement. The goal to improve student achievement across the curriculum is very broad and may be difficult to accomplish. Perhaps this could be broken down into more doable pieces, with specific action steps to help students gain mastery of specific standards.

The school improvement process should continue as the action plan is implemented. The school should continue to be reflective about its work. It must accurately describe the current reality, describe what would be ideal, and then set realistic, measurable goals in order to move toward the ideal. The staff could benefit from the work of Rick DuFour and others on setting SMART goals:

**S**—Strategic and Specific

**M**—Measurable

**A**—Attainable

**R**—Results-Oriented

**T**—Time-Bound

The school should continue to work for commitment to the plan, including the new administration, faculty, and school community.

## **CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM**

### **Commendations:**

- The Visiting Team commends the faculty, staff, and administration of South Davis Middle School for engaging in a thorough self-study process. The process allowed for teacher, staff, parent, and student input, and clearly identified school strengths and weaknesses.
- The Visiting Team commends the school for its commitment to continuous improvement. The staff has shown willingness to implement current best practices and programs on behalf of students.



- The Visiting Team commends the school community for its collaborative efforts in the process. All stakeholder groups have participated, been heard, and been validated through the process. The end result is an educational mission that can be endorsed by all.
- The Visiting Team commends the administration, staff, and faculty for their commitment to providing excellent and appropriate educational opportunities for their students.

### **Recommendations:**

- The Visiting Team recommends that the school continue to use multiple forms of data to identify gaps in student achievement. This should include a data collection, management, interpretation, and distribution system in order to inform instructional practice.
- The Visiting Team recommends the continued study and implementation of middle-level best practices. This would include smaller learning communities and developmentally responsive instructional practices such as integrated activities.
- The Visiting Team recommends continued work on the school improvement plan to bring the allocation of all resources into alignment with the school educational agenda. This would include continued collaborative work to ensure the collective commitment of administrators, faculty, staff, parents, students, and the school community.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school work to focus its efforts on increased student achievement. This would include evaluation of programs and practices for instructional effectiveness and importance in reaching the goals of the educational agenda. Ineffective programs, or programs that deplete the resources of the school but do not satisfy the educational agenda, should be strategically abandoned, and effort given to sustaining those research-based programs that will help the school move toward its identified goals.